

Can nurses be trained as facilitators for physicians' learning?

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Background

In caring for palliative patients, general practitioners (GP) in Belgium collaborate with palliative home care teams (PHCT). GPs state to learn from this collaboration. Registration and literature seem to indicate that this learning process is indirect, unintentional and probably inefficiently. Training nurses to recognize and address learning opportunities might facilitate GP's learning. There are no papers found reporting on a training program for nurses to act as a facilitator for GP's learning. This study aims to fill in this gap.

Aim

To describe the development and evaluation of a training program for PHCT nurses, designed to facilitate GPs' learning.

Study design and method

The content was based on literature of preceptor- and mentorship. The program consisted of a full day of training and half a day of a booster session three months later. Between training and booster session, homework assignments and individual feedback by telephone was provided. A summative assessment was done using a videotaped conversation. Semi-structured interviews were done to discuss personal experiences.

Results

Thirty-five nurses participated. The training was overall experienced as useful. The homework assignments showed to be fundamental to put theory into practice but interfered with the workload. Some program items were more difficult to practice (e.g. incident analysis), others were done easily (e.g. giving feedback). Practicing some trained items conflicted with workplace procedures or personal preferences of professional role. Twenty-five nurses took part in the assessment; fourteen passed (14/25=56%).

Conclusions

Palliative care nurses can be trained as a facilitator to enhance GPs' learning in the workplace, although some do not prefer this role due to personal characteristics. Protected time is needed to enter the training. To develop such a training program, characteristics of the interprofessional collaboration and workplace organization should be considered.